A Supplemental Guide to

Foster Home Licensing

NC Division of Social Services
Family Support and Child Welfare Services Section
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Introduction

If you are a North Carolina foster care licensing professional or you supervise a North Carolina foster care licensing professional, this guide is for you. Developed by the NC Division of SS and the Jordan Institute for Families, UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, this guide has one simple goal: to help licensing social workers succeed.

Whether you're a novice or a seasoned veteran, we believe you'll find this guide has a lot to offer. If you're new, you'll probably want to keep it within easy reach for a while. Why? Because it presents essential information about the rules, walks you through all the major licensing actions, and puts you on the road to mastering the many complex tasks and interactions of licensing.

But wait—there's more. This guide also describes the whys, wherefores, and unwritten rules of successful licensing practice. In these pages you'll encounter explanations of the "big picture" thinking behind the little details in North Carolina's licensing procedures. You'll also find suggestions for preventing and responding to placement disruption and a host of other critical practice issues.

One of the reasons we're so sure this guide will meet your needs is that we developed it using input from a panel of licensing professionals from public and private agencies, the Division's licensing staff, faculty from the Jordan Institute for Families at the UNC-Chapel Hill School of Social Work, and hundreds of North Carolina's foster parents. Collectively these experts have hundreds of years of experience with licensing and foster care. They shared their wisdom with us for one reason: to help you negotiate the licensing process and ensure the safety, permanence, and well-being of children in foster care.

This Guide Aims to Help Licensing Professionals . . .

- **Ensure children receive safe, stable, and nurturing foster care placements.** This is the ultimate purpose of all licensing work.
- **Find, understand, and correctly implement licensing rules and standards.**
- **Make the connection between the rules and the philosophy behind them**, including the idea that the safety of the child (and of everyone else) is our first concern and the notion that the use of family-centered practice can benefit all families, including foster families.
- **Use the 12 skills to enhance the safety and well-being of children.** All North Carolina foster families receive training that promotes partnership and teaches 12 skills used in successful fostering and adopting. Assessing and enhancing foster parents' use of these skills is an essential, ongoing task of licensing professionals.

How to Use This Guide

You don't have to read this guide from cover to cover. However, as a first step we strongly recommend that you sit down and read the first two chapters (they're short!). We also urge you to read Chapter 8, "Critical Practice Issues," BEFORE you're facing disruption, allegations of maltreatment in a foster home, or another crisis; this will help you avert disaster and develop a plan for how to respond if things take a turn for the worse.

Quick Search. If you are in a hurry and know what you're looking for you can do a quick search of this document. In Adobe Acrobat, select "Edit" from the menu bar at the top, then select "Search." Type the term you are looking for in the field provided and view the search results. Often "less is more" with these types of searches. For example, if you are looking for information about use of the DSS-5015 for initial licensure, it would be best to search the term "5015" and then browse through the search results for the information you want, rather than entering in a more complex search term.

Icons Used in This Guide

Watch for these short highlights of essential learning points.

This owl signifies empirical evidence that serves as the basis of many recommendations and practice tips.

This icon points you to resources for learning more.

You Can Always Call Us!

The staff members at the Licensing Authority are part of the team serving children and families. If, after consulting this guide, you have questions about anything that has to do with foster care licensing, please contact us for guidance or consultation: 828/669-3388 (NC Division of Social Services, Regulatory and Licensing Services, 952 Old U. S. 70 Highway, Black Mountain, NC 28711).

To Leave a Message with the Licensing Authority

Good communication is important in the relationship between licensing professionals and the Licensing Authority. Please use the following as a guide when leaving messages.

- Speak your name and phone number slowly and clearly
- Provide area code with phone number
- If checking status of application:
  - Give proper name of foster parents
  - Indicate whether it is for family foster care or therapeutic foster care
  - Give county of family residence
  - Provide facility ID number if already licensed
- Leaving question on message is helpful
- Please refresh our memory if we've previously discussed this family / issue